

Figurative Language: Taking Words Beyond Their Literal Meaning

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What is figurative language?

- words or expressions, called “**figures of speech,**” that have a different intended meaning from their literal interpretation
- the opposite of **literal language**, in which words match their definition

Why use Figurative Language?

- to play with a word's **literal meaning**
- to make writing more **creative** and **fun**
- to allow a reader to **visualize** a scene

For example, the idiom:

"It's raining cats and dogs."



How to Use Literal Language

- Compare unrelated things with
 - **similes** (using the words "like" or "as")
 - **metaphors** (without using "like" or "as")
- Use an **idiom**, or common expression
- Animate an object with **personification**

Similes

To enrich your writing, use the words **like** or **as** to compare things which are otherwise unrelated. For example,

- Instead of "Fred ran so fast"
 - try **"Fred ran as fast as the wind"**
- Instead of "Her lips are very red"
 - try **"Her lips are red as a rose"**
- Instead of "He is so sly"
 - try **"He is sly like a fox"**

Metaphors

You can also make enriching comparisons of otherwise unrelated things *without* using "like" or "as" -- for example,

- Instead of "Roy is a sweet boy"
 - try **"Roy has the heart of a lion"**
- Instead of "I was so happy to hear her"
 - try **"Her voice was music to my ears"**
- Instead of "life has ups and downs"
 - try **"life is a roller coaster"**

Idioms

Expressions used by a particular group of people with a meaning that is only known through common use ...

| Idiom | Meaning |
|-----------------------------|---|
| "a blessing in disguise" | an event that seems negative but ends up being positive |
| "a chip on the shoulder" | not able to let go of a bad experience |
| "costs an arm and a leg" | expensive |
| "running against the clock" | running out of time |

Personification

Assigning human-like qualities to something that is not human, as in...

- "The carved pumpkin smiled"
- "The car's headlights winked"
- "The sun smiled down on the town"
- "Milk's favorite cookie is oatmeal"
- "This computer hates me"
- "The camera loves her"

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These will help you do just that!

similes

metaphors

idioms

personification

The end.

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